# LITTLE STORIES OF CHILDREN WHO REVEL IN PLAYGROUNDS

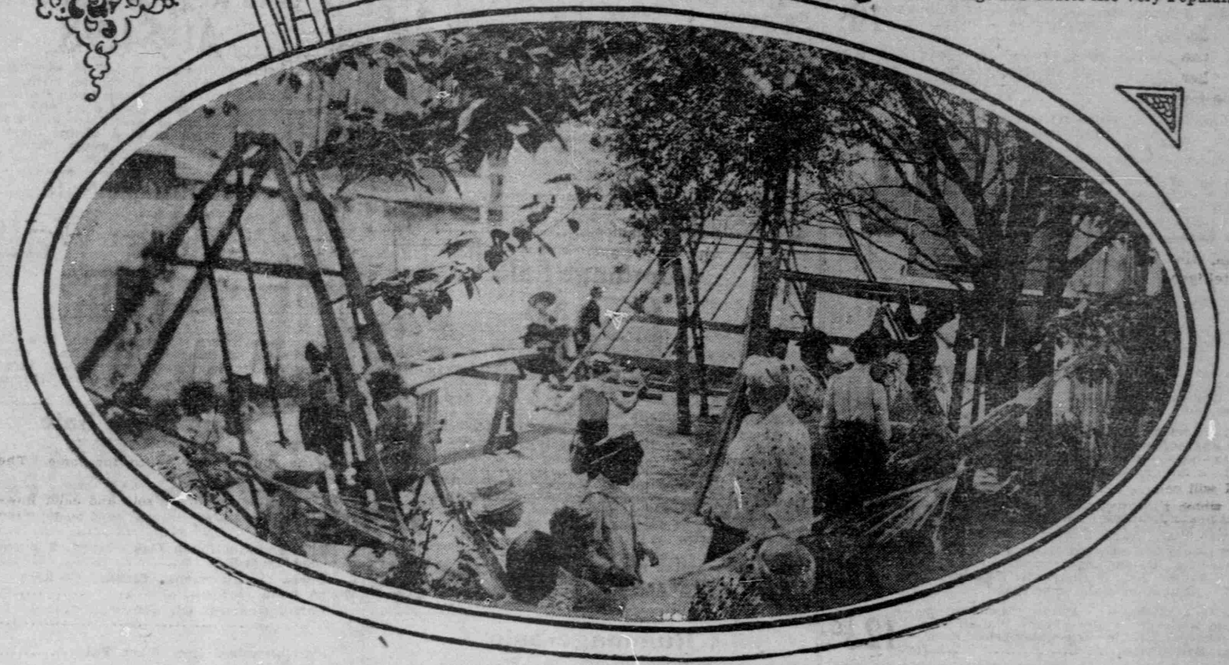
Down the Incline at High Speed

An Ingenious Janitor at One of the Playgrounds Developed This Method of Amusement in Answer to Demand.

Swings Rest Tired Hands

POPULAR CORNER OF PLAYGROUND
Children Take to Apparatus That Involves the Element of Falling, and Swings and Chutes Are Very Popular.

NO PLAYGROUND FOR THESE YOUNG AMERICANS.
Boy Residents of a Washington Alley. Shut in by Brick Walls and Police Regulations From the Sports That Boys Love.



PLAYGROUND AT NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE.
In This Small Inclosure, 35 by 45 Feet, More Than a Hundred Children Are Gathered Nearly Every Day.

## Through the Associated Charities Health and Strength Offered.

## Longings for Fields and Pastures Gratified in a Measure.

"CHEESE it, cheese it, boys. Here comes de cop!"

There will be a rapid scurry of bare legs, bats will be collected, balls stuffed into gaping pockets and the energetic members of the Whistling Swedes and the Terrible Turks will disappear around the corner, just as the representative of the law's majesty makes his belated appearance.

It is altogether probable that he has made no special effort to be on time. The kindly policeman has "been there himself," quite realizes that boys will be boys and undertakes the execution of the order that the lads must not be allowed to play on the streets or in vacant lots with very ardent zeal. But it is an order—to be carried out more or less rigidly—and so the boys must not play.

It is such scenes as these that the Associated Charities, working through its committee on playgrounds, have sought to banish from the streets of Washington. The success that has already been attained is sufficient to inspire confidence, to urge to renewed and greater efforts, to render assured the conclusion already reached, that to provide playgrounds and opportunities for healthful exercise is a beneficence as wise as it is profitable.

### Much Money Needed.

Money is needed, of course—$1,000 at the very moment—to equip and operate the eleven playgrounds in existence or in course of construction. Cuno H. Rudolph, chairman of the committee, and his able and devoted corps of assistants, have worked and given much, both in time and money, but more is an exigent necessity. It must be had if the good work is to go on. If the good people of Washington could see what is being done they would hesitate no longer to put their hands in their pockets and help.

They must see to be convinced. If they cannot or will not see with their own eyes, let them then through the eyes of the Sunday Times.

A story will illustrate the spirit in which these opportunities for relaxation are welcomed and what a fund of health and happiness and good spirits is lost to the community when these opportunities are denied.

Some time ago the Associated Charities gave one of its summer outings, taking a trolley car full of boys and girls to a suburban resort. It chanced that it rained that day—in torrents and bucketfuls—so that the children never disembarked from the car, but were taken immediately back to the city. It was a bitter disappointment to those in charge of the outing, as well as to those who were its beneficiaries, and in the memories of the latter the regret lurked and lingered for months after.

It was three months afterward that one of the boys sidled up to one of the young women who had been in charge of the party.

"Miss Smith," he confided, "if it hadn't rained that day and we had got off the car and the ground had been good, us fellers was going to play baseball."

He had never ceased to think of the lost opportunity for enjoyment.

### An Inhuman Denial.

In Washington, for some reason that resides obscurely in the brains of the powers that be, the vacant lots and the streets are tabooed to the children, for any games that make for noise and healthful excitement. While there are few tenements, there are many one and two-room houses, and many families who live cooped in a single room. Their condition is not better than that of the tenement dwellers of New York and Chicago, and the condition of the children, with no yards, the streets closed, and so few playgrounds, would be entirely bereft of youthful pleasure of the right sort.

That is, unless they defied the powers—which, of course, they do. The little fellows are sentries for those of more mature years, and their warning cries send their fellows scurrying away. When the good-natured policeman does turn up he views the scene with a knowing grin.

"Why, they're gone," he murmurs, softly—and then, just as softly, he winks the other eye.

But this is not wise or well. Defiance of law is not healthful for the young—does not inspire ideals of good citizenship in their breasts nor teach them the lessons of order and government that in some way or other, at some time or other, all must learn. If it is not learned aright—this lesson—it must be learned in the cruel and bitter school of experience.

### Learned on Playgrounds.

And it is learned on the playgrounds. The children must make some provision of their own for the use of the apparatus, for it is obvious that with 200 children, and perhaps twenty methods of amusement, all cannot be actively engaged at the same time. They must take turns—and they do. There is supervision of the intelligent kind always, but as the children come to get into the ways of the playgrounds less and less is needed. They make laws for themselves; they prescribe how long anyone person or set of persons shall be permitted to monopolize one piece of apparatus; they preserve order and discipline; they keep the peace. It is training for citizenship of a very real description.

The volunteer workers who attend at the playgrounds all bear testimony to this fact.

"There were fights and squabbles among the boys when the playground was first opened," said one of them, "but now they are of the rarest occurrence. The boys have learned they take up too much time, that could be occupied in having fun. They don't want to lose a chance of having all the fun they can, and they either give up the fighting or put it off until they are off the grounds. It is an education in self-repression they give themselves and I am sure they are better for it."

### A Gain in Strength.

The gain in physical strength is equally marked. Some of the playgrounds, notably that at Neighborhood House, are devoted entirely to the girls, and even casual visitors have been able to notice the increased health and strength that they attain.

Take, for instance, the work on the "flying-rings." When they come there first, the little ones are barely able to catch hold of the rings and drag themselves from the ground; after a few months of active exercise it requires the exertion of an able-bodied policeman to induce them to yield their places to some one else.

"I can't do it myself," said Charles F. Weller, secretary of the Associated Charities," but these girls learn the trick in a few short weeks. Their ability fills me with amazement; the strength they acquire is an unfailing tribute to the practical utility of the city playgrounds."

To one who makes a habit of visiting these institutions the good they do is sufficiently marked. It is not hard to differentiate between the children who occupy the playgrounds of two years' growth and those who have just begun to make use of these golden opportunities of childhood. The first are strong and healthy; the second are weaklings, moody, and unhappy. The playgrounds, where youthful spirits have found their proper and legitimate outlet, have made the difference.

### A New Work Is Begun.

Just latterly a new work has been begun. The supervisior of the playgrounds has organized an athletic league, purposed to develop the latent athletic qualities of all the children who make these centers of strength and happiness their daily haunts. The leaders of each playground are to be selected through competitive meets, and in September, about the first of the month, a general meet is to be held to determine which of these ward champions shall wear the laurel of victory.

The plan has been tried in Boston, Chicago, and other cities; everywhere it has been a success. It would be a success here.

Speaking of the good that is being accomplished one of the workers said:

### Help for the Babies.

"The babies enjoy the playgrounds, too. Some of them stay here all night. After 6 o'clock in the evening the swings are taken down, but that does not stop the fun, for your East Sider is resoureful, to say the least. Other swings are brought in and put up. Hammocks, improvised and otherwise, are put up for the sick babies. Some are made of sacks; occasionally you will find a soap box suspended from the ropes. The babies are made snug and left out in the open air. If they are too young to walk home their parents come after them in the morning."

Any person who needs an example of philosophical resignation should go down to one of the playgrounds merely to make the acquaintance of "Andy" and "Tom" and "Jerry." Their other names are Max, Jacob and Isidor. Max is a sadly deformed hunchback, twelve years old and quite small for his age. Jacob is lame, and drags one foot painfully behind, and one leg is practically useless. Isidor is deaf and dumb. They are the most cheerful souls you ever saw, and you will always find them together. The reporter for the Sunday Times saw them watching the other boys at play.

"Are you a trapeze expert?" Max was asked.

"No," he answered, "but I have a fine time here. You ought to see some of the others who come here. They have to be brought in chairs. Besides, I can run. Jacob can't."

Then Jacob was called upon to defend himself.

"I can't run," he said, "but, just the same, I can play tennis better than you could think, and I can throw a ball better than Max. I can't complain. Just look at Isidor. He can't speak or hear music."

### In the Public School.

It has been the ardently hoped for ambition of Mr. Rudolph to introduce the playgrounds into the public schools. This ambition is being gradually achieved. Two of the playgrounds now in process of construction are in public school yards. How warmly the project is approved by the Board of Education may be gathered from the following letter, from Superintendent A. T. Stuart to Mr. Rudolph:

"In reply to yours of July 15, requesting permission to equip the yards of the Arthur and Stevens schools with certain apparatus for the use of neighboring children, I would say that I have submitted your request to every member of the Board of Education, excepting two, who are out of town, and all have cordially approved the plan. After conference with Assistant Superintendent Montgomery, in charge of the colored schools, I suggest the Magruder in place of the Stevens as providing more space. It is, of course, understood that the janitor cannot give his whole day to the supervision of the playground, unless your committee makes special arrangements with him to do so, as he is required under the rules to be at his building only during morning hours, and the board does not wish to deprive him entirely of his vacation."

From the Government of the United States has come equal encouragement. One wish of the committee has been to replace the volunteer guardians of the children's welfare with persons to whom this charge shall be a duty. In response to a letter from Mr. Rudolph, Col. Charles G. Bromwell, Superintendent of Public Buildings and Grounds, has has written as follows:

### The Government Helps.

"In compliance with your request of the 19th instant, I have directed that one of the two night watchmen, which we are allowed for Garfield Park, be detailed for duty between the hours of 2 and 10 p. m. at the playground on reservation No. 126, at the intersection of Virginia and Georgia Avenues and L Street, between Ninth and Eleventh Streets southeast. Also that some park settees be placed around the reservation."

The playground that is to be equipped at Arthur School is for the benefit of the children in Purdy's Court, which lies in the very shadow of the Capitol. It is the Italian quarter of the city; it is there, if anywhere, that the need for such an institution exists. The little Italians require an outlet for their energy; this the playground will supply. Those now in charge of the enterprise feel that it is properly a public function and consider they are only filling a temporary place until Congress or the District authorities shall awake to their opportunities.

There was a time when kindergartens were supported by private philanthropy; now they have become a part of the public school system in most of the large cities. It is hoped and believed that the history of playground equipment, and operation will follow the same trend.

### The Neighbors Approve.

There has been much evidence of neighborhood approval of the work. A few days ago a man, obviously of the respectable working class, came up to the young woman who was in charge of the playground, in the Southeastern section of the city. He asked her to explain the work the playground was designed to accomplish, and she explained—as well as she could.

"I like it," he said. "I think it's going to do good and I want to help. I can't do much, but here's a quarter, and I'll give that every week. I am going to try to get my friends to do the same thing."

On the playgrounds are to be seen many "little mothers," girls of ten or twelve years, with their infant sisters or brothers in their arms. The little ones they have in charge play in the sand box; they themselves mingle with the older children in this place of glad delight. The real mothers are content and satisfied; the "little mothers" are pleased and happy in the pursuit of childish sports among children of their own age.

## BY THE PLAYGROUND.

By MARY WHITE OVINGTON.

Which of the summer sounds
Is sweetest to tired hearts?—
The low, unwearying hum
Of the bee in the clover bed?
The hymn of the thrush at dusk?
Robins that call in the rain?
Cool waves slipping away
From the boat as she sails through the sea?
Whisper of wind in the wheat?
Or, from the fresh smelling field
When the heaven is thick with her stars,
The cricket's comforting chirp
Telling of welcome and home?

Hot winds bearing the noise
Of a city's traffic and cries,
And from the little square
The voices of children in song.
Hundreds of children at play,
Circling and singing their glee;
Glad in the gift of today,
The sunshine and warmth of the earth,
The joy of youth but begun!
Chorus of mirth and goodwill,
Childhood's treble of hope—
This is the summer sound
The sweetest the tired heart knows.

—From The Outlook.

### MANSFIELD'S STORY.

Richard Mansfield was not always a successful actor. On his last visit to Washington he related to a group of friends one of his early experiences.

"I was in London in the middle of summer," he said. "The theatrical business was particularly dull, and besides, it was at a period of my career when managers were not wildly desirous of securing my signature to a contract. My clothes were none too good, my shoes were worn from tramping of the streets, and I was dodging my old acquaintances.

"Suddenly my arm was seized by a flashily dressed individual whom I recognized as a garrulous friend of better days. He asked me where I was going, and then before I had time to reply he invited me to drink with him. Before I could decline he was dragging me in the direction of the nearest bar.

"Now I didn't need a better edge on my appetite than I already had, but as my friend followed up his invitation to imbibe with the further invitation to dine with him, I ceased expostulating with him and accompanied him to the bar.

"As we finished drinking he felt through his pockets once, then a second time, more hurriedly, after which he turned to me with an apologetic grin: 'Blast the luck, old chap,' he said,' but I've left me money at home in me other clothes, you know. Just settle for this, will you, and I'll fix it with you when we meet again, you know.'

"I paid my last two shillings for the ale and went out of there with a magnificent appetite."